The concept of moral principles in healthcare practices

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Moral principles provide a basis for medical and clinical practices. The essence of ethical practice is necessary for balancing ethical considerations at all levels where healthcare professionals identify ethical, legal, and professional standards in making judgments. Ethical principles are incorporated in hospitals in the interpretation of ethical issues and in making effective clinical decisions.

Core and Secondary Principles of Medical Ethics

Moral principles help health practitioners better understand and be aware of competent, ethical decision-making. The primary and basic moral principles include justice, beneficence, non-maleficence, and respect for autonomy which are combined with secondary ethical principles of confidentiality, fidelity, and veracity in emphasizing ethical discrepancies (Vaughn, 2012). These principles are the foundation for practical decision-making when considering the consequences of universal moral principles when developing clinical judgment.

Autonomy and Beneficence in Conflict

The concept of moral principles in healthcare practices dictates the ethical obligations of the practitioners based on moral values. Under this case scenario, there is a conflict of interest between autonomy and beneficence moral principles. This is because autonomy highlights clients' self-determination and self-governance through which the clients' rights, choices, and values are respected. In the principle of autonomy, a method of informed consent is used to promote and respect one's autonomy. Based on this principle, John should not disclose the participant's HIV/AIDS status to her boyfriend without her consent. The participant has to decide for herself whether to tell her boyfriend or not. In the beneficence principle, actions, and judgments are made to benefit others by preventing or removing harm. John is expected to refrain from interfering with the participant's autonomy, but he also has an obligation to the boyfriend. According to the beneficence principle, John should disclose the HIV/AIDS status of her participant to her boyfriend for him to acquire medical care.

Subjective Relativism and Disclosure

Applied ethics guides the platform through which conflict of moral issues can be resolved by healthcare practitioners. By combining the virtues of truth and morality, fortunate results can achieve good intentions in John's case. In addressing the conflict, I would apply the concept of ethical relativism in consideration of Subjective Relativism. Based on subjective relativism, the appropriate action to take is to disclose the information to the boyfriend and let him make his own choices. Subjective relativism highlights that each person is his authority morally and that if one's judgments feel right, there is no need for further justification from others. It is not fair for the participant to unknowingly contradict HIV/AIDS to her boyfriend. Additionally, considering normative ethics, the argument made by the participant for not disclosing her status voluntarily does not meet the moral standards, and hence her autonomy is overviewed. Before having unprotected intercourse with her boyfriend, she should have at least taught him about her condition.

Preventing Harm Overriding Confidentiality

The participant's autonomous decision conflicts with John's beneficence duty. John can be allowed to waive the principle of autonomy in the interest of pursuing the beneficence principle. Implicitly, all regulations support that beneficence prevails when there is less at stake regarding self-determination. In this case, prioritizing autonomy will harm the participant's boyfriend. This is because the social norm requirement overrides the participant's autonomy. Since the participant and her boyfriend have already had unprotected sex, the boyfriend has naturally contracted HIV/AIDS, and hence telling him about her girlfriend's status would be of more benefit than considering the participant's confidentiality. John should tell the participant's boyfriend about the HIV/AIDS status of her girlfriend. The participant's actions appear to be intentional. The obligation to prevent harm is apparently strong and should prevail over the agreed-upon confidentiality terms.

When Law Conflicts With Moral Duty

In a situation where the researcher should not disclose the patient's HIV status, this fact would not change my judgment because all people, not only medical practitioners, should be focused on truth and doing what is right. This is because these laws have immoral and wrong consequences, and more of their contents are unjust. In other words, any laws that prohibit HIV and AIDS awareness in any situation are morally wrong. All laws should reflect moral principles, and the interpretation of these laws should be based on moral and ethical values to be positively perceived. Laws that protect people who harm others intentionally should not be adhered to. In this case, all legal regulations on handling HIV patients should be aimed at ensuring the patient's safety as well as the safety of the other people around them. The confidentiality laws cannot overshadow the negligible risk of HIV transmission posed by the participant. Given the health implications of HIV/AIDS, the boyfriend has the right to

know with or without his girlfriend’s consent.

Ethical Principles as Guides for Clinical Judgment

In conclusion, using moral norms and principles, researchers, and physicians can make firm decisions when faced with ethical dilemmas. Additionally, these moral principles of beneficence, autonomy, and justice- just to mention a few- aim to guide the relationship between the patients and the physicians. Without these ethical principles, medical practitioners may not be able to make ethical considerations while addressing issues and making critical judgments. Medical ethics should be incorporated into the mainstream of all healthcare practices and in resolving ethical issues involving human participants. Ethical principles in research should be used to guide the goals of the research and ethical research practices and achieve moral behavior in all overall health practices and ethical decisions.

Reference

Vaughn, L. (2012) Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases. (3 rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press